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SUBJECT: MGLE01: NORTHERN LEBANON POOREST DISTRICT IN THE COUNTRY.

SUMMARY

1. On March 22, econoff met with Statistics Lebanon chief Rabi Haber to attain non-governmental statistics on poverty in Lebanon. According to its recently completed annual survey of households, Statistics Lebanon found that qadas in northern Lebanon had the highest poverty rates in the country. Akkar had the highest poverty rate with 58 percent of households in poverty. Qadas in southern Lebanon and the Biqa Valley enjoyed significantly lower poverty levels, with most below the average of 20 percent. Mount Lebanon also had poverty levels lower than 20 percent. Qadas Batroun and Chouf had the lowest poverty rates in the country. Beirut was remarkable, not only for its low poverty rate, but because two-thirds of its households were in the "middle class." Every other qada saw a majority of its households in the "lower class" if not in poverty. Haber's study did not find a link between education level and poverty by qada, but did register a correlation between poverty rates and average family size. End summary.

POVERTY WORST IN NORTH

2. On March 22, econoff met with Rabi Haber, Managing Director of Statistics Lebanon, a private marketing data firm. Statistics Lebanon conducts annual house-to-house surveys throughout Lebanon. Haber divided the survey's households into "upper class," "middle class," "lower class," and "lower lower class" based on a complex formula comparing a household's income to its family size and expenses. The raw data is represented in para 8. below. Based on this data, Haber was able to give a independent picture of poverty, defined as "lower lower class," in each qada of Lebanon. The average qada had 20 percent of households in poverty. Haber's survey data showed that the far north of Lebanon had the most households in poverty by a wide margin over other parts of Lebanon. Qada Akkar had 58 percent of households in poverty, qada Bcharre had 53 percent in poverty, and qada El Minieh-Dinnieh had 52 percent in poverty. Three other northern qadas, Tripoli, Zghorta, and Koura, were home to fewer families below the poverty level with 22, 25, and 23 percent respectively; but were still above the average for all qadas.

BIQA AND SOUTH NOT SO POOR?

3. Surprisingly, even qadas in the Biqa Valley and southern Lebanon had far lower poverty rates than the north, according to Haber's data. Qadas Sidon and Tyre on the coast each had about 10 percent poverty, while further inland southern qadas

had higher poverty rates with 14 percent in Nabatiyeh and 21 percent in Hasbaya. Nonetheless, the worst southern qada had a lower poverty rate than the best northern qada. In the Biqa Valley, the percentage of families living in poverty were: 15 percent in Baalbeck, 18 percent in West Biqa, 14 percent in Zahle, 13 percent in Rachaya, and nearly 20 percent in Hermel. It is worth noting, however, that qadas in the Biqa Valley and in the south had a high percentage of their households in the "lower class" just above the poverty level defined by Haber.

#### MOUNT LEBANON AND THE BEIRUT ANOMALY

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¶4. Walid Jumblatt's Chouf boasted a nine percent poverty rate, the second lowest in Lebanon. The Mount Lebanon region enjoyed poverty rates below the national average: 18 percent in Baabda (which includes the southern suburbs of Beirut), 14 percent in Metn, 12 percent in Jbeil, 13 percent in Kesrouan, and 11 percent in Aley. Qada Batroun had the lowest poverty rate with just seven percent. However, like in the Biqa Valley and in the south, there were high percentages of households in the lower class just above the poverty line. The data from mostly Christian and Druze Mount Lebanon appeared to suggest that the income gap between Christians and Muslims may not be as wide as commonly perceived.

¶5. Qada Beirut was unique in that it had a low poverty rate (10 percent), the highest rate of "upper class" households (2.3 percent) and the highest percentage of "middle class" households. According to Haber's study, two-thirds of Beirut households were in the middle class. The next closest qada was Batroun with 30 percent of households considered middle

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class. Every other qada had a majority of households in the "lower class," if not in poverty. For example, qada Tyre, which had a poverty rate of only 11 percent, saw 75 percent of its households in the lower class, and just 10 percent in the middle class.

#### EDUCATION NOT RELATED TO POVERTY

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¶6. Haber's survey also tracked educational attainment status. There was no apparent correlation between the percentage of residents in each qada with university or higher degrees and the poverty rate in the qada. The average for all of Lebanon was 23 percent of people had earned university degrees or higher. One of the poorest qadas, Akkar, had 23 percent of residents university-educated. In El-Minieh-Dinnieh, another poor qada, 22 percent of residents had a university degree or higher. West Biqa had the highest university graduate rate with 34 percent. Beirut's university graduate rate was only 26 percent despite being the richest qada. The lowest university graduate rates were in Bcharre (13 percent), Batroun (16 percent), and Chouf (16 percent). Bcharre had the second highest poverty rate, but Batroun and Chouf had the lowest poverty rates, further suggesting no obvious link to education and poverty in Lebanon's qadas (Note: It is common practice for university graduates to refuse any work beneath their education, which may explain how poverty could exist in qadas with a high rate of education. In rural areas, such as Akkar, there are less job opportunities available at a level consistent with a university degree. End note.)

#### FAMILY SIZE RELATED TO POVERTY

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¶7. The qadas with the highest poverty rates also tended to have the largest percentage of households with five or more family members. Akkar, the qada with the highest poverty rate, was also the only qada where more than a tenth of households had 10 or more family members. El Minieh-Dinnieh,

Tripoli, Hermel, and Baalbeck all had at least five percent of households, with 10 or more members. Qadas that are estimated to have majority Sunni or Shia populations tended to have larger families. Families in the mostly Druze Chouf were only marginally bigger than in Christian-dominated Mount Lebanon.

#### CLASS DESIGNATIONS BY QADA

18. Haber's raw data is presented below. The numbers may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

In northern Lebanon:

--Akkar: Upper class: 0.33 percent; Middle class: 12 percent; Lower class: 29 percent; Lower lower class: 58 percent; unknown: 1 percent.

--Tripoli: Upper class: 0.39 percent; Middle class: 21 percent; Lower class: 51 percent; Lower lower class: 22 percent; unknown: 6 percent.

--Zghorta: Upper class: 0.28 percent; Middle class: 22 percent; Lower class: 44 percent; Lower lower class: 25 percent; unknown: 8 percent.

--El Minieh-Dinnieh: Upper class: 0.10 percent; Middle class: 15 percent; Lower class: 28 percent; Lower lower class: 52 percent; unknown: 5 percent.

--Bcharre: Upper class: 2.17 percent; Middle class: 15 percent; Lower class: 18 percent; Lower lower class: 53 percent; unknown: 11 percent.

--Koura: Upper class: 1 percent; Middle class: 28 percent; Lower class: 41 percent; Lower lower class: 23 percent; unknown: 7 percent.

In the Biqa Valley:

--Baalbeck: Upper class: 0.13 percent; Middle class: 14 percent; Lower class: 65 percent; Lower lower class: 15 percent; unknown: 6 percent.

--Hermal: Upper class: 0.06 percent; Middle class: 10 percent; Lower class: 62 percent; Lower lower class: 20 percent; unknown: 8 percent.

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percent; unknown: 8 percent.

--Rachaya: Upper class: 0.66 percent; Middle class: 11 percent; Lower class: 65 percent; Lower lower class: 13 percent; unknown: 11 percent.

--West Biqa: Upper class: 0.19 percent; Middle class: 15 percent; Lower class: 60 percent; Lower lower class: 18 percent; unknown: 7 percent.

--Zahle: Upper class: 0.26 percent; Middle class: 18 percent; Lower class: 63 percent; Lower lower class: 14 percent; unknown: 5 percent.

In southern Lebanon:

--Nabatiyeh: Upper class: 0.10 percent; Middle class: 16 percent; Lower class: 63 percent; Lower lower class: 14 percent; unknown: 7 percent.

--Hasbaya: Upper class: 0.79 percent; Middle class: 6 percent; Lower class: 60 percent; Lower lower class: 21 percent; unknown: 11 percent.

--Sidon: Upper class: 0.26 percent; Middle class: 20 percent; Lower class: 63 percent; Lower lower class: 10 percent; unknown: 7 percent.

--Tyre: Upper class: 0.11 percent; Middle class: 10 percent;  
Lower class: 75 percent; Lower lower class: 11 percent;  
unknown: 4 percent.

In Mount Lebanon:

Aley: Upper class: 0.33 percent; Middle class: 25 percent;  
Lower class: 60 percent; Lower lower class: 11 percent;  
unknown: 5 percent.

Baabda: Upper class: 0.80 percent; Middle class: 27 percent;  
Lower class: 50 percent; Lower lower class: 18 percent;  
unknown: 4 percent.

Chouf: Upper class: 0.19 percent; Middle class: 21 percent;  
Lower class: 65 percent; Lower lower class: 9 percent;  
unknown: 5 percent.

Batroun: Upper class: 0.07 percent; Middle class: 30 percent;  
Lower class: 55 percent; Lower lower class: 7 percent;  
unknown: 7 percent.

Metn: Upper class: 0.84 percent; Middle class: 25 percent;  
Lower class: 55 percent; Lower lower class: 14 percent;  
unknown: 5 percent.

Jbeil: Upper class: 0.19 percent; Middle class: 27 percent;  
Lower class: 54 percent; Lower lower class: 12 percent;  
unknown: 6 percent.

Kesrouan: Upper class: 0.43 percent; Middle class: 28  
percent; Lower class: 55 percent; Lower lower class: 13  
percent; unknown: 4 percent.

In Beirut:

--Beirut: Upper class: 2.38 percent; Middle class: 66  
percent; Lower class: 17 percent; Lower lower class: 10  
percent; unknown: 4 percent.

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